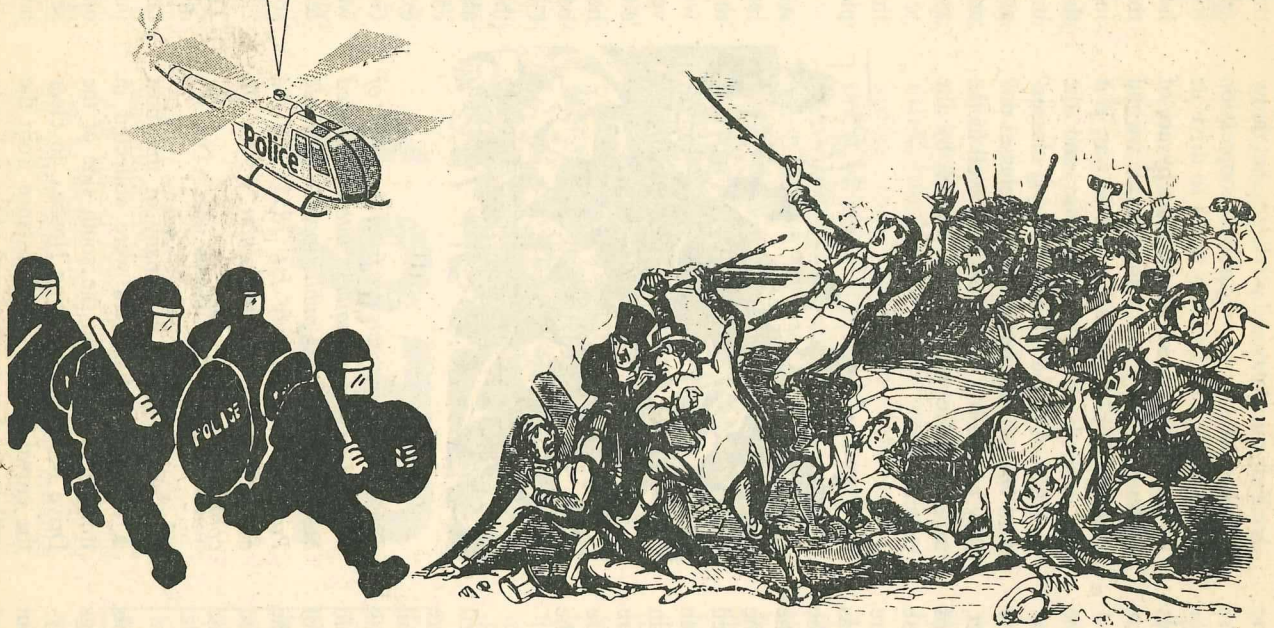


THE BATTLE FOR HYDE PARK:

ruffians, radicals and ravers, 1855-1994

Police helicopter orders the demonstrators to leave the park or face forceful removal



1855: "it looked as if the demonstration was going to simmer down to harmless Sunday amusements, but the police reckoned differently"

1866: "The police brought their truncheons into active use, and a number of the roughs were somewhat severely handled"

1932: "mounted police charged forward only to be repulsed by thousands of workers who tore up railings and used them as weapons and barricades"

1994: "the flashpoint came when thugs opposed to legislation against raves tried to turn the park into a giant party"

Free/Donation

Introduction

On the huge anti-Criminal Justice Bill march on October 9th 1994, I had a sense of being in another time zone. Sometimes, like when the police helicopter swept low broadcasting the order to disperse, it felt like I'd been transported to some future techno-totalitarian state, a science fiction landscape out of 2000AD or Robocop. But when people with sticks and stones stood their ground under the trees against charging police armed with stronger sticks and shields and horses it could have been any time in the last couple of thousand years, a basic technology of power and resistance that hasn't changed much since Roman times or probably even longer.

Hyde Park itself has seen such scenes before in the 1850s and 1860s, in the 1930s, and doubtless at other times besides. Some of these are described here as well as reflections on the most recent events. Events of 140 years ago might not seem very relevant today, but in some ways they still have a bearing on the present even at this distance.

Some opponents of the CJB seem to believe that it represents a departure from traditional British liberties (e.g. "Britain has a long tradition of tolerance which the CJB drastically contravenes", David Bennun, Melody Maker Oct 22 1994). A quick look at history scotches the myth of the tolerance of the British state. There was no "right of assembly" at Peterloo, Manchester in 1819 when 11 demonstrators were killed by troops. Nor for Indian people at Amritsar, where British troops opened fire on a peaceful crowd in 1919 killing 379 people, or in Derry in 1972, when 14 unarmed people were shot dead by paratroopers after defying a ban on demonstrations.

Whatever "liberties" we have today have not been given to us willingly. If today we can within certain limits demonstrate, form our own organisations, and publish our own papers and magazines, it is because in the past so many people defied the laws that banned them from doing these sorts of things. Today many people take it for granted that thousands of people can demonstrate in Hyde Park but in the past demonstrations were often banned there. In the 1850s and 1860s people repeatedly ignored bans en masse until the state was forced to back down; the Royal Parks and Gardens Act 1872 allowed public meetings in the park, albeit with some restrictions.

The state likes to present itself as invincible, with laws that can't be broken enforced by police that can't be beaten. The long battle for Hyde Park shows that with determination and ingenuity we can successfully resist their laws. The Criminal Justice Bill is now law but it doesn't have to stay that way.

1855

In June 1855, Hyde Park was the scene of mass defiance of the authorities. The spark was Lord Grosvenor's Sunday Trading Bill, which sought to stop shopping and other activities on the Sabbath, and would have mainly affected the poor. There was also resentment at the Crimean war and at the hypocrisy of the aristocracy who wanted to parade up and down Hyde Park on Sundays while stopping others from enjoying themselves. It was not surprising therefore that the Park became the centre of opposition to the Bill. The first protest took place on Sunday June 25th, and among those present was Karl Marx, then in London, who wrote a report of the events for the German newspaper Neue Oder Zeitung:

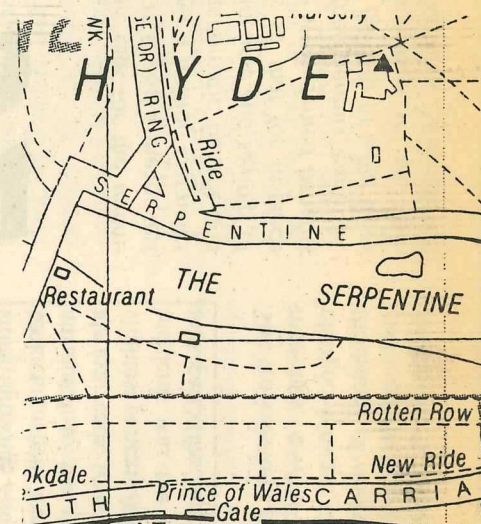
There has been a rapid succession of measures of religious coercion. The first measure was the Beer Bill, which shut down all places of public entertainment on Sundays, except between 6 and 10 pm. Then came the Sunday Trading Bill. In both cases there is a conspiracy of the Church with monopoly capital, but in both cases these are religious penal laws against the lower classes to set the consciences of the privileged classes at rest. The Beer Bill was as far from hitting the aristocratic clubs as the Sunday Trading Bill is from hitting the Sunday occupations of genteel society. The workers get their wages late on Saturday; they are the only ones for whom shops open on Sundays. They are the only ones compelled to make their purchases, small as they are, on Sundays. The new bill is therefore directed against them alone.

This was the occasion yesterday of a mass demonstration in Hyde Park. We were spectators from beginning to end and do not think we are exaggerating in saying that the English Revolution began Yesterday in Hyde Park (*sorry Karl, we're still trying!*).

Lord Robert Grosvenor, who fathered the Sunday Trading Bill, when reproached on the score of this measure being directed solely against the poor and not against the rich classes, retorted that "the aristocracy was largely refraining from employing its servants and

horses on Sundays." The last few days of past week the following poster, put out by the Chartists and affixed to all the walls of London, announced in huge letters:

"New Sunday Bill prohibiting newspapers, shaving, smoking, eating and drinking and all kinds of recreation and nourishment, both corporal and spiritual, which the poor people still enjoy at the present time. An open-air meeting of artisans, workers and 'the lower orders' generally of the capital will take place in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon to see how religiously the aristocracy is observing the Sabbath and how anxious it is not to employ its servants and horses on that day, as Lord Robert Grosvenor said in his speech. The meeting is called for three o'clock on the right bank of the Serpentine, on the side towards Kensington Gardens."



It should be borne in mind, of course that what Longchamps means to the Parisians, the road along the Serpentine in Hyde Park means to English high society - the place where of an afternoon, particularly on Sunday, they parade their magnificent horses and carriages with all their trappings, followed by swarms of lackeys. It will be realised from the above placard that the struggle against clericalism assumes the same character in England as every other serious struggle there - the character of a class struggle waged by the poor against the rich, the people against the aristocracy, the "lower orders" against their "betters".

"we are treated like slaves"

At 3 o'clock approximately 50,000 people had gathered at the spot announced on the right bank of the Serpentine.

Suddenly shouts could be heard on all sides: "Let's go to the road, to the carriages!" The heaping of insults upon horse riders and occupants of carriages had meanwhile already begun. The constables, who constantly received reinforcements from the city, drove the promenading pedestrians off the carriage road. They thus helped to bring it about that either side of it was lined deep with people.

The spectators consisted of about two-thirds workers and one-third members of the middle class, all with women and

Meanwhile the metropolitan electric telegraph had informed all police stations that a riot was about to break out in Hyde Park and the police were ordered to the theatre of military operations. Soon one detachment of them after another marched at short intervals through the double file of people, each received with the popular ditty: "Where are the geese? Ask the police!". This was a hint at a notorious theft of geese recently committed by a constable in Clerkerwell.

Most of the London papers carry today a brief account of the events in Hyde Park. No leading articles as yet, except in Lord Palmerston's Morning Post- it claims that "a spectacle, both disgraceful and dangerous in the extreme has taken place in Hyde Park, an open violation of law and decency- an illegal interference by physical force in the free action of the legislature." It urges that "this scene must not be allowed to be repeated the following Sunday, as was threatened."

Hyde Park became royal property when Henry VIII confiscated it off the Church in the 16th century. It has stayed that way ever since, except for a period in the 1650s when the King was executed and the Park sold off. In 1637 Hyde Park became the first royal park to be opened to the public, and it was to become a favourite playground for the wealthy who came there to parade in their coaches. The royals hunted deer in the park until 1769.

The area was also a place of terror for the poor. The Tyburn gallows stood at Marble Arch from 1571 to 1783, where in the eighteenth century more than a thousand people were publicly hanged to teach the poor obedience and respect for the property of the rich.

By the 1850s, Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square were the only two major open spaces in central London, and both were the scenes of conflict as the state tried to stop people meeting in them. A serious of confrontations in the Square culminated in Bloody Sunday 1887, when several people were killed by police during a mass illegal demonstration. In Hyde Park, the key battles took place in the 1850s and 1860s.

(for the story of Tyburn and the Gordon riots read **The London Hanged**, by Peter Linebaugh, Penguin, 1991; for Trafalgar Square see **Trafalgar Square: emblem of empire**, by Rodney Mace, Lawrence & Wishart, 1976)

1855

A week later another protest took place in the Park, in defiance of a ban on meetings there. Faced with such protests, Lord Grosvenor eventually withdrew his proposals. Marx describes what happened on July 1st:

Even according to the account given in the police bulletin at half past two already 150,000 people of every age and social estate surged up and down the park and gradually the throng swelled to such dimensions as were gigantic and enormous even for London... once again the crowd lined both sides of the drive along the Serpentine, only this time the lines were denser and deeper than the previous Sunday. However, high society did not put in an appearance. High society had given wide berth to the place of combat and by its absence had acknowledged vox populi to be sovereign.

It got to be four o'clock and it looked as if the demonstration for lack of nutrition was going to simmer down to harmless Sunday amusements, but the police reckoned differently. Were they going to withdraw amidst general laughter, casting melancholy farewell glances at their own big-lettered placards - posted up on the portals of the park? Eight-hundred constables had been strategically distributed. Big squads were stationed in neighbouring localities to serve as reinforcements. In brief, the police had drawn up a plan of campaign which was "of a far more vigorous description," according

to the Times "than any of which we have yet had notice in the Crimea." The police were in need of bloody heads and arrests in order not to fall from the sublime to the ridiculous without some intermediate link.

[Orders were issued] allegedly for the protection of passing carriages and riders. But as both carriages and riders stayed away and there was therefore nothing to protect, they began to single some individuals out of the crowd and have them arrested on false pretences, on the pretext that they were pickpockets. When this experiment was repeated more and more often and the pretext no longer sounded plausible, the crowd raised one big cry. At once the constabulary rushed from ambush, whipped their truncheons out of their pockets, began to beat up people's heads until the blood ran profusely, yanked individuals here and there out of the vast multitude (a total of 104 were thus arrested) and dragged them to the improvised blockhouses.

Only a small strip of land separates the left side of the drive from the Serpentine. Here an officer of the police and his detail manoeuvred the spectators to the very brink of the lake, threatening to give them a cold water bath. To escape the clubbing one of the crowd swam across the Serpentine to the opposite shore, but a policeman followed him in a boat, caught him in a boat and brought him back triumphantly.

During the demonstration several attempts were made again to hold separate meetings in various places. At one of them an anonymous speaker harangued his audience about as follows: "Men of Old England! Awake! Rise from your slumbers, or be forever fallen! Oppose it every succeeding Sunday, as you have done today... Don't fear to

demand your rights and privileges, but throw off the shackles of oligarchical oppression and misrule. His lordship wants to drive us to church and make us religious by act of Parliament, but it won't do. Who are we and who are they? Look at the present war, is it not carried on at the expense and the sacrifice of blood of the producing classes? And what do the non-producing classes do? they bungle it". The speaker as well as the meeting were stopped, of course by the police.



The following extracts are from the report of the parliamentary enquiry "into the alleged disturbance of the public peace in Hyde Park on Sunday, July 1st, 1855; and the conduct of the Metropolitan Police in connexion with the same".

It was observed that many of the most disorderly characters were collected in front of the rails on the south side of the Drive near the Receiving House... to clear the crowd back to some distance from the railings [orders were given] to the police to clear the road and the rails, and to use their staves... the police advanced with their truncheons drawn along the carriage road of

the Drive, clearing it of people. Some of whom, not readily yielding or quitting the road, were pushed, struck, and roughly handled. The policemen also passed along the Drive, striking on the rails, and brandishing their staves over the heads of the crowd there, and in some instances striking at them, in order to compel them to fall back. These proceedings produced or increased irritation and ill feeling on the part of the people assembled; offensive expressions were used to annoy the police, some stones were thrown at them, and frequent collisions took place.

About six o'clock in the evening a large mass of people set out from Hyde Park towards Grosvenor Gate and Pink Street, with cries of "Now to Lord Robert Grosvenor's." Soon afterwards a crowd was collected before Lord Robert Grosvenor's house in Park Street. No actual violence, beyond throwing a stone at Lord Robert Grosvenor's messenger, was committed by them; but their number and clamour were alarming. The crowd yelled and groaned, calling "Chuck him out," and using other expressions of hostility to Lord Robert Grosvenor, and their aspect and proceedings were sufficiently menacing to excite the fears of the inmates of the house, though some of the cries were of a jocular character.

The police rushed forward with their staves drawn. Though there was no serious resistance, some of them, whilst dispersing and pursuing the crowd, used their staves, and otherwise acted with violence, inflicting severe injuries on several persons who were not shown to have been guilty of any violence, but who refused to move off when requested so to do, or who, being inoffensively there, ran or stood still when the police came up the street.

1866/7

The focus of the 1866 demonstration was the agitation of the Reform League for universal male suffrage, but it quickly spread beyond the demand for working men to have the vote to the question of the "right to assembly" when Home Secretary Spencer Walpole and chief-of-police Sir Richard Mayne took the decision to ban the meeting in the Park.

The thinking of the ruling class was summed up in the *Times* the day after the protest: "It is against all reason and all justice that motley crowds from all parts of the metropolis should take possession of Hyde Park, and interfere with the enjoyments of those to whom the Park more particularly belongs". Indeed there were some who thought that the Park was no place for the lower orders at all, let alone for their meetings. A letter in the paper on July 23 called for the authorities to do "their duty of protecting our blessed pleasure ground from its present degradation", complaining that "Every night the park is made the sleeping-place of a horde of the lowest and filthiest of street Arabs, who perform there everything except their ablutions, and leave it in the morning in a state of abomination indescribable by a decent pen in a decent paper".

In the afternoon of July 23 "vast crowds had collected in the neighbourhood of Hyde Park. A force of foot and mounted police, numbering 1,600 or 1,800, was here assembled and at 5 o'clock the gates were closed. Shortly after 7 o'clock Mr Beales and his friends [leaders of the Reform League] went up to the police, who were drawn up in line, staves in hand, some of them being mounted. The crowd immediately closed in, and endeavoured by an "ugly rush" to effect admission. The police used their staves freely to defeat this attempt."

The leaders then proceeded to Trafalgar Square to hold their meeting, but many people had other ideas and were determined to get into the Park if necessary by going through the fences: "a large portion of the masses were not disposed to follow implicitly the instructions of their leaders. The gates, it is true, were strongly fortified, but to throw down the railings seemed a feasible undertaking, and this was promptly attempted. The police, indeed, hastened to every point that was attacked, and for a short time kept the multitude at bay; but their numbers

were utterly insufficient to guard so long a line of frontier, and breach after breach was made, the stonework, together with the railings, yielding easily to the pressure of the crowd.

A good deal of scuffling attended these incursions. The police brought their truncheons into active use, and a number of the roughs were somewhat severely handled. The police on the other hand, did not come off unscathed. One of them received a thrust in the side from an iron bar; another was knocked off his horse by sticks and stones and several others sustained slight injuries. Stones were thrown at Sir Richard Mayne, who, as well as his men, was much hooted. Between 40 and 50 persons were taken into custody in the vicinity of the Marble Arch, and about as many more at the other approaches."

The historic victory over the government and the police was celebrated in the radical Reynolds' Newspaper, July 29, 1866.

The people have triumphed, in so far as they have vindicated their right to meet, speak, resolve, and exhort in Hyde-park. True, the gates were closed and guarded against them. They were not allowed to enter by the customary, the legal, and the constitutional way. But, then, they found out there were other ways than the legal, the constitutional and the customary way of effecting an entrance.

Yes, the gates of Hyde-park were closed against them, and, lo! in twenty minutes after, Hyde-park all round was one vast, wide, gaping gate... By a long pull, a strong pull and a push all together, down went the iron railings and the stones in which they were fixed in hundreds of yards, so that in less time than it takes to tell the story, the iron barriers which excluded the people from Hyde-park were levelled to the ground, or inclined against the trees, for miles. Then the people poured in hundreds of thousands into the park and there, under the nose of Sir Richard Mayne and before the masses of the bludgeon-brigade, and though scarlet lines of Foot Guards and Life Guards, with bayonets fixed and sabres drawn were flanking the police, and ready to charge, a meeting was held.



According to one eye witness "in the corner of the Park inside the Marble Arch... mounted policemen charged now and then with great impetuosity, but not, as it seemed to us, with much practical result, except that the crowd ran helter skelter in all directions". By eight o'clock "The numbers in the Park were very large, and although of course there were a considerable number of "roughs" who look on the police as their natural enemies, many of the persons present appeared to be quiet and respectably dressed people."

The night finished with "a series of wanton outrages on private property" in the wealthy West End. "After leaving the Park, gangs of ruffians broke the windows in Great Cumberland Street. Others of the rioters went southward, and the Lord Chancellor's windows shared the fate of those on the other side of the Park"

(source: *the Times* 24 and 25 July 1866).

In May 1867 the Reform League announced plans to hold another meeting in Hyde Park, and once again the government refused permission. On May 4 it was reported that "Nearly all the proclamations issued by Mr Walpole and posted all over London, have been either torn down or defaced. In some cases they have been completely covered by what is called "the yellow placard" [which] calls on the people to disregard Mr Walpole's proclamation, and to attend in thousands and vindicate their right to hold their meeting in the Park". On the day of the demonstration the *Times* announced that the "Government has abandoned its opposition to the meeting in Hyde Park, which is to be surrendered this evening to King Mob" (6 May). The following day it reported:

This great meeting, the threat of holding which in defiance of the Government, and still more the Government preparations to prevent its being held, have kept the metropolis in a state of chronic alarm and agitation for the last month passed of with the quietness and good order of a temperance meeting [although] more than 10,000 men, police and military, were kept ready to move and close in upon the Park yesterday within half an hour.

It was a vast assemblage of people, certainly not less than 40,000 to 50,000 people being in the Park. A fair proportion of these belonged to the class popularly known as "roughs". These lay about in great groups all over the grass, either fast asleep, playing pitch and toss, or laughing and singing. There were acrobats, cardsharps, ballad singers without number...

1914

By 1914 the campaign for votes for women had become increasingly bitter with women being jailed and forcibly fed, and widespread arson and sabotage by militant suffragettes. According to Sylvia Pankhurst, "Railway stations, piers, sports pavilions, haystacks were set on fire... A bomb exploded in Westminster Abbey... one hundred and forty-one acts of destruction were chronicled in the Press during the first seven months of 1914". The Women's Social and Political Union was banned from holding meetings in Hyde Park.

On April 4th, the Ulster Unionist Militants organized a demonstration with processions to Hyde Park. Such a challenge to the Suffragettes (still, Sunday by Sunday, battling to regain the old meeting place, which the Government had forbidden them) could scarcely be allowed to pass. The WSPU immediately demanded the raising of the ban against its meetings, but met the old refusal. A procession to the park was accordingly announced, and members of the local WSPUs marched in with sticks decorated in the purple, white and green, escorting Mrs Drummond in a dog-cart. Lively scenes ensued. The police led the vehicle out of the park. Flora Drummond descended and was hoisted to speak on the shoulders of her supporters, but was immediately arrested. Women rushed for the Ulster platforms and were repelled by the police. Ulster speakers strove for a hearing against Suffragettes bobbing up to make unauthorized speeches and police rushes to suppress them.

On another occasion "A water carnival was announced for the Serpentine" in Hyde Park by the WSPU.

Women paraded with decorated sunshades. Others appeared in dominoes, each carrying a letter of the word Suffragette on her chest. One girl in Japanese dress turned up in a rickshaw drawn by a girl companion in knee-breeches. The Office of Works, shocked by the prospect of of such merry advertising by persons who had banded themselves together for the commission of serious crime, had prohibited the Serpentine to all comers that day, the boats being lashed together in midwater to prevent their use. Nothing daunted, the Suffragettes flung off their wraps, revealing themselves in bathing costumes, swam out to the craft and cut them free. The police sprang into boats and followed them, captured the offending navigators, brought them to the banks, and took them dripping in their bathing dress to the police station.

(source: *The Suffragette Movement*, Sylvia Pankhurst, 1931).

1932

In 1931, the benefit rate for the unemployed was cut by 10% and a means test was introduced. Over a million claimants were cut off from automatic benefit and had to declare the income and savings of all family members so that for instance many young people were denied benefits and had to live off their parents' earnings. In September 1932 the first of what were to become 1500 marchers set off from Scotland on the National Unemployed

Workers Movement fourth hunger march, which was to finish in Hyde Park.

By mid-day approximately one hundred thousand London workers were moving towards Hyde Park from all parts of London, to give the greatest welcome to the hunger marchers that had ever been seen in Hyde Park. It is estimated that five thousand police and special constables were gathered round the park, with many thousands more mobilised in the neighbourhood in readiness for action.

As the last contingent of marchers entered the park gates, trouble broke out with the police. It started with the special constables; not being used to their task, they lost their heads, and, as the crowds swept forward on to the space where the meetings were to be held, the specials drew their truncheons in an effort to control the sea of surging humanity. The workers turned on the special constables and put them to flight, but the fighting which they had been responsible for starting continued throughout the whole afternoon.

"professional organizers have decided to exploit a cheap form of discrediting the Government... small crowds indulged in stone throwing... some shop windows were broken... such trouble as occurred was attributed to the rowdy persons who are always ready to create disturbances on the slightest pretext. A feature of the most ugly incidents was the number of women who took part" (*the Times*, 28 October 1932)

The workers kept the police back from the meetings; several times mounted police charged forward, only to be repulsed by thousands of workers who tore up railings and used them as weapons and barricades for the protection of their meetings. Many

mounted men were dragged from their horses. From the streets the fighting extended into the park and back again into the streets, where repeated mounted police charges at full speed failed to dislodge the workers. The foot police were on several occasions surrounded by strong forces of workers, and terrific fights ensued. Many workers and police were injured. Inside the park one could hear the roar of the crowd as they fought tenaciously around the Marble Arch and along Oxford Street.

As dusk came on fighting was still proceeding, more severe than ever. The police chiefs had established a post on the top of one of the high buildings in Oxford Street, and were directing the operation of their forces by a system of signals and telephones. Hundreds of police would move in formation against the workers down the main drive of the park, or up Edgware Road or along Oxford Street, but still the workers fought back and repeatedly broke through the police charges. As the great meetings came to an end many of the marchers had become involved in the fighting, along with the London workers, but as the bugles sounded the termination of the meetings, the marchers who were scattered around the area of Marble Arch began to make their way back to the centre to join their contingents.

The workers also pressed forward in order to reach the marchers and give them protection against the police as they marched out. The surge forward on the part of the workers broke through all police resistance, and tens of thousands who had been fighting all the afternoon poured into the park to line up again under their banners and march out with the hunger marchers.

(source: *Unemployed struggles 1919-1936* by Wal Hannington)

1994

The march against the Criminal Justice Bill on October 9th was a huge sprawling noisy affair of perhaps 100,000 people. There was a wide diversity of people on the streets opposing the law, festival and party goers, squatters, travellers, hunt saboteurs, anti-road protesters, Outrage, Billy Power of the Birmingham 6 and what the Daily Mail described as "a grouping of organisations from Lesbian Avengers to cloaked members of the Druid Clan of Dana". After all this is the Bill with something for everyone: new police powers, the abolition of the "right of silence", new prisons for children...

Police tactics had been provocative from the start, when they seemed intent on making it as difficult as possible for people to join the march by closing down tube stations and blocking roads. The old tactics of having lines of police marching alongside the demonstration were replaced with having large concentrations of cops at particular points on the route, riot gear at the ready. The mood of the marchers was also a bit more defiant than previously as the reality of the Bill loomed ever closer. Despite this the march was good fun with lots of percussion, rhythms being banged out on drums, tins, and lampposts, and various wannabe vanguard parties of the proletariat struggling to keep up as people weaved in and out of their fading banners.

By around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I was lying on the grass in Hyde Park chatting to some friends. In the distance the march was still going along Park Lane. Behind me a crowd were dancing round the cycle powered Rinky Dink sound system. A Sinclair C5 with sounds mounted on the back emerged from the crowd and a load of people went dancing off after it. Every so often a there was a big cheer from the main part of the crowd as a speech finished. A handful of cops in flat

caps wandered past, seemingly to inspect the state of the toilets, but nobody paid them much attention and people carried on rolling spliffs regardless. On another sunny day on July 24, a march had finished with a big dancing in the fountains party in Trafalgar Square, and it looked like we were heading for more of the same.

When I walked over towards the Marble Arch end of the park however, it was obvious that partying was not going to be so easy. Two lorries with sound systems on the back were blocked in by police vans which were refusing them entry into the park (I think the sound systems on the march were from Megatripolis, Desert Storm and Smokescreen). A big crowd was gathered around dancing in the streets and refusing to be intimidated. There were people on top of a bus stop and at one point a couple of people even climbed on top of a police van and started dancing. The police put on riot gear, a few missiles were thrown, and somebody left off some gas, but after a stand off it was the cops that backed down and let the trucks carry on. The lorries headed off into the park with the crowd partying on and around them. People pulled police barriers across the road behind the crowd to prevent the police horses who were following from charging into us.

The lorries pulled up by the main stage and loads of us climbed up on the stage and started dancing. Again I thought it was all over and I sat down in the park to chill out. The next thing we heard a load of noise from the Park Lane side of the park and we looked round to see the police horses. They had charged and were now being chased themselves by a crowd of people running after them. The police regrouped and charged into the main body of the crowd most of whom had been unaware that anything much was going on. After the initial panic people turned around and faced the horses. The pattern was repeated several times- horses charging, then the crowd closing in on the cops, till eventually the horses were withdrawn to a big cheer. Next a line of cops in riot gear came in and the same happened- charge and counter-charge - with the same result of the police pulling out.

Powers in relation to raves

53.—(1) This section applies to a gathering on land in the open air of 100 or more persons (whether or not trespassers) at which amplified music is played during the night (with or without intermissions) and is such as, by reason of its loudness and duration and the time at which it is played, is likely to cause serious distress to the inhabitants of the locality; and for this purpose—

- (a) such a gathering continues during intermissions in the music and, where the gathering extends over several days, throughout the period during which amplified music is played at night (with or without intermissions); and
- (b) "music" includes sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats.

5.40 - 7.15pm: Police fail to disperse demonstrators



The remaining demonstrators are forced up Oxford Street where they continue to clash with the police as far as Bond Street tube station. Along Oxford Street shop windows are smashed

80 mounted police and numerous riot police charge the demonstrators repeatedly and fighting starts between police and demonstrators. Police finally retreat to the safety of Park Lane

8.45pm: Police clear the final 1500 demonstrators from the park

Disruptive trespassers

58.—(1) A person commits the offence of aggravated trespass if he trespasses on land in the open air and, in relation to any lawful activity which persons are engaging in or are about to engage in on that or adjoining land in the open air, does there anything which is intended by him to have the effect—

- (a) of intimidating those persons or any of them so as to deter them or any of them from engaging in that activity,
- (b) of obstructing that activity, or
- (c) of disrupting that activity.

At this point the fighting would probably have died down if the police had gone quietly, and left everybody to get on with partying. But of course they couldn't be seen to back down, so instead loads of white police vans moved up Park Lane from the Marble Arch end and having lost control of the Park established control of a bit of road instead. Apart from anything else this had the effect of blocking in many of the coaches taking people home so they had to stick around whether they wanted to or not.

"I was pushed down on the floor, punched, hit across the back with a truncheon, and then three police were just kicking me and hitting me with truncheons"

Vincent Seabrook, Liberty legal observer, New Statesman, 14 Oct 1994

For the next few hours nobody moved very far. Although some people faced up to the police in Park Lane itself, most of the crowd ended up inside the Park separated by the metal railings from the riot cops. This made it difficult for the police to launch baton charges or send in the horses, and when they tried to force their way through the small gates in the railings they were repelled with sticks, bottles and whatever else was to hand.

There were some very surreal touches while all this was going on: people dancing not far from the police lines, a unicyclist weaving his way through the riot cops, a man firebreathing. Alongside the fighting this kind of behaviour was probably harder for the police to handle than a straightforward riot; this sort of unpredictability just isn't in the manual!

This was not the blood-crazed anti-social mob portrayed by the media, a lot of people were enjoying themselves and looking out for others. At one point a line of people blocked Park Lane outside

the Grosvenor Hotel, but when somebody noticed that an ambulance was stuck in the traffic they quickly got out of the way.

By about nine o'clock a lot of people had gone home, and the Park in the dark didn't seem such a safe place. A police helicopter swooped down with a spotlight trained on the crowd and its own sound system broadcasting the message "Disperse now or force will be used", and police were moving in on people. But dispersing wasn't easy even for those who wanted to go home. Lines of riot cops blocked most of the roads out of the area, and Marble Arch tube stations was closed (followed shortly by Bond Street and Oxford Circus). When a gap appeared in police lines part of the crowd took the opportunity to pour up Oxford Street with horses charging up behind and police motorbikes alongside. Some people smashed shop windows as a last two fingers up to the cops before dispersing.

"Revolt of the Ravers"

The flashpoint came when thugs opposed to legislation against raves tried to turn the park into a giant party

The ravers who call the tune- behind a front of legitimate protest, the underground party organisers who have spread misery throughout the country - music that became a rallying cry for violence.

Daily Mail, 10 and 11 October 1994

Some people have argued that the police deliberately provoked a riot to make sure the CJB was passed, but this ignores the fact that there was never any danger of the CJB not being passed, as there had never been any serious opposition to it within Parliament. Others have blamed "anarchist troublemakers", but if people were that easy to manipulate why

weren't there riots on the other marches?

"Exposed: secret plot to take over Hyde Park"

"senior officers were aware that agitators planned to start a 'rave' in the park using the sound systems which accompanied the march... The business of allowing large, mobile sound systems in a political demonstrations is a serious new problem that we will have to deal with"

The Job, Metropolitan Police paper, October 14 1994.

The fact was that a resistable police force met the immovable object of an increasingly angry crowd. The police, no doubt thinking of the months ahead, wanted to show that they would always have the upper hand. Tired of being pushed around and facing the threat of having important parts of our lives shut down by the CJB many people decided that enough was enough. Some people physically fought with the police, others showed their defiance by refusing to budge. As the reports from the Job and the Daily Mail make clear, for the police the people who just wanted to party were as much part of the "extremist plot" as those who who wanted to fight as well as dance.

The costs were high. Many were injured, and 48 arrests were made. The police have launched "Operation Greystoke" to arrest more of those involved, and the courts have ordered the press to hand over film and photos to the police. But the police did not have it all their own way; and people showed that when the police come to close down festivals and parties after the CJB becomes law they won't find it easy.

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At the beginning of November the CJB became law as the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. The first arrests under the Act have been made, and the first acts of resistance have taken place. Laws can be defeated. Demonstrations were banned in Hyde Park in the 19th century, but they still took place. Sound systems were banned from the Park in 1994, but we still partied. Contacts: ● Freedom Network, 372 Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8PT (071 738 6721), for info about CJB ● Park Lane Defendants Campaign c/o Coalition against the CJB, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS (071 923 0333), for those arrested on October 9th ● United Systems - International Free Party Network, c/o 19 Thirleby Road, Burnt Oak, Middlesex MA8 0HF (tel/ fax 081 959 7525). Also check out these interesting zines: ● SQUALL c/o 2 St Pauls Road, London N1 2QN, "Magazine for assorted itinerants" with good coverage of squatting etc. ● Contraflow, 56a Infoshop, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 (fax 071 326 0353), free paper with news of international subversion, listings etc. ● Alien Underground, BM Jed, London WC1N 3XX, "Techno theory for juvenile delinquents".